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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 007124

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 4)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2011

TAGS: PREL PHUM PTER UNSC IR IZ EG LE SY

SUBJECT: ABOUL GHEIT URGES U.S. SUPPORT FOR LEBANON TRIBUNAL, WARNS AGAINST ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAN, SYRIA

Classified By: Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit and the Ambassador discussed Iraq, Iran, Syria and Lebanon in a December 12 meeting. Aboul Gheit strongly cautioned the U.S. not to engage Iran or Syria under current circumstances and repeated his call for the U.S. to "destroy the Iraqi militias." He reaffirmed Mubarak's standing invitation for PM Maliki (as well as President Talibani) to visit, but said Mubarak never issues formal or written invitations, as Baghdad seemed to want as a matter of protocol. On Lebanon, Aboul Gheit said that during Amre Moussa's December 12 visit to Beirut, the Arab League SYG hopes to salvage and resolve details for a "package" that was compromised because it was prematurely released. If the Government of Lebanon cannot proceed with the Hariri tribunal, "then the UNSC must act" to try the case in another venue. End summary.

¶2. (C) Aboul Gheit told the Ambassador on December 12 that the U.S. should not involve Iran in the Iraq discussions in the present environment. Calling the proposal (of the Iraq Study Group) "stupid," Aboul Gheit said asking Iran to moderate activities in Iraq while they continue with their nuclear program will only empower them. The situation with Syria is the same, he said, explaining that both countries would charge "a price" for their cooperation. The U.S. should be bold in confronting both nations, laying out in specific terms what they must do, he said. Aboul Gheit cautioned, however, that Egypt does not support either an invasion or covert activities.

¶3. (C) Aboul Gheit called for urgent action to control the Iraqi militias, warning that absent this, there will be civil war. The U.S. cannot rely on the Iraqi government because they are involved with militias as well. "PM Maliki is one of them," he said. If necessary, "the U.S. should send a division to take Baghdad and destroy the militias." If the militias can be controlled, the Iraqi people will fight the insurgency, he predicted. President Mubarak welcomes Iraqi leaders but "it is not our practice ever to extend formal invitations to anyone," Aboul Gheit clarified. If Maliki or Talibani want to come, they need only to express an interest and suggest two dates; Egypt will respond, Aboul Gheit said. He remarked with some annoyance at having made arrangements for Mubarak to receive Talibani today, December 12, only to have Talibani cancel just two days before. Aboul Gheit said he had no news on a possible Iraqi Ambassador to Egypt because the Iraqis cannot agree on a nominee. FM Zebari had promised to nominate one as long ago as October 2005 when Aboul Gheit met him in Bahrain. Aboul Gheit said he does not meet with the Iraqi Charge because he "do(es) not know his (factional) allegiances."

¶4. (C) On Lebanon, Aboul Gheit said Amre Moussa was traveling to Beirut today at Siniora's request to salvage the deal that was compromised by its premature disclosure before finalization. (He named and implicitly disparaged Sudanese emissary Mustafa Osman for this result.) "The Syrians must be stopped," Aboul Gheit said. "If the GOL cannot proceed with the Hariri tribunal on its own, then the UN must act to try the case before the ICJ, or another special tribunal." However, he said, Egypt had raised the possibility of an international tribunal with Chirac, who said the Russians would not go along because of Chechnya. But Mubarak had rejoined that the Russians could always veto any UNSC action on a Chechnya tribunal, hence there could be no valid Russian concern over precedent.

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